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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD
SIGINT COMMITTEE
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

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2 June 1966

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

Subject: Possible Compromise in the Field of SIGINT

References: (a) USIB-S-13.5/28, 18 April 1966
(b) USIB-S-13.5/20, 19 July 1965

BACKGROUND

1. On 13 April 1966, the Director, National Security Agency, forwarded a memorandum to the Chairman, USIB, pertaining to a possible compromise in the field of SIGINT involving a proposed book, "The Codebreakers", by Mr. David Kahn. The memorandum advised that NSA had received a request from the Directorate, Security Review, of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, to review the entire manuscript of Mr. Kahn's proposed book and requested USIB assistance in preparation of an appropriate reply to the OASD.

2. By reference (a), the NSA memorandum was circulated for the information of Board Members and was concurrently referred to the SIGINT Committee for preparation of a report to the Board in consultation with the Security Committee. Reference (b) is a prior SIGINT Committee report on its earlier review of Chapters 1 and 17 of the proposed book.

3. The following SIGINT Committee report on the subject, concurred in by the Security Committee, is in response to the charge of the Board and is circulated for consideration by USIB of the recommendations contained in paragraph nine.

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APPROVED FOR
RELEASE ☐ DATE:
05-Feb-2009

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4. A Joint Working Group of the SIGINT and Security Committees has conducted a review of the entire manuscript in question. The Working Group finds that the author has produced a reasonably accurate portrayal of the U.S. cryptologic effort. The manuscript in its entirety constitutes the most publicly revealing picture that has ever been presented of U.S. SIGINT activities and the agencies engaged in this field. The author has very diligently pieced together a tremendous mass of information, the majority of which he has attributed to open sources.

5. The Committee believes that any published compilation of COMINT successes along the lines and scope presented by the author could cause real damage to the U.S. COMINT effort. It would provide foreign communications security authorities with a stimulus to critically assess their current and future communications security programs.

The possibility of jeopardy to our relationships with present or potential allies is, of course, also a major consideration.

6. The Committee has consulted with U.S. communications security authorities with regard to possible damage to the U.S. communications security effort.

COURSES OF ACTION

7. Irrespective of the damaging aspects of the book, the Committee is advised that there appears to be no legal action which could be taken to prevent its publication. The nature of dealings with the author to date indicates it is most unlikely that he can be persuaded to withhold publication of his manuscript or any portions thereof. These findings, it is noted, are essentially the same as the previous USIB-approved determinations of the SIGINT Committee relative to Chapters 1 and 17 of the book (reference (b)).

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8. Official policy, however, would seem to require an attempt by persuasion to eliminate the references to COMINT or COMINT activities in the book (paragraph 27, DCID No. 6/3). Although the author is free to seek another publisher if he desires to do so, it is felt that some attempt should be made to convince the Macmillan Company that publication of information relative to at least current governmental cryptologic activities, such as the Chapter 19 on NSA, is not in the national interest. Any official effort to block publication of this most objectionable portion of the book by attempting to dissuade the publisher offers no guarantee of success, of course, and could prove counterproductive unless carefully undertaken; any action which could be construed as aimed at suppressing publication could work to the disadvantage of the Government if advertised, simply causing notoriety and controversy, with the net effect of enhancing the sale of the book.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Since the Government has requested prepublication review of the entire manuscript (Enclosure 2 of reference (a)), it is recognized that not to object in some way might be tantamount to tacit endorsement. (In this regard it is noted that reference (a) advised the Board that OASD has already informed the Macmillan Company that Chapters 1 and 17 "have been reviewed for security and cleared for publication".) Although it is possible that the publishers at this point in time will decline to eliminate any parts of the book, in order to avoid implied sponsorship as well as advertisable allegations of attempted suppression, it is recommended that the USIB approve the following statement to be used as a basis for a letter to the Macmillan Company:

a. "Generally speaking, the bulk of those portions of the manuscript dealing with modern cryptology is a further presentation of a mass of published information both official and unofficial, a considerable amount of the latter being of doubtful validity, supplemented by the author's own speculation and imagination. Although, allegedly, no classified sources have been used in the preparation of the manuscript, publication of detailed information concerning relatively recent cryptologic activities during and after World War II (including portions of Chapters 1 and 17 previously reviewed) is nevertheless undesirable, particularly references to current governmental activities of the United States and its allies. 1/

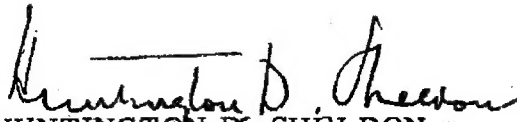
1/ The Department of State Member's comment applies (see paragraph 3a of the covering memorandum).

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It has been a long-established official policy that any publicity regarding Government cryptologic activities in detail, irrespective of its validity, is not in the best interest of the United States.

b. "If, after consideration of the foregoing, the decision is made to proceed with publication, the Macmillan Company would be acting in the national interest by eliminating Chapter 19 in its entirety. ^{2/} Also, *Further* ~~in this regard~~, it is noted that the manuscript notes contain a statement that the Department of Defense has given security clearance to certain portions of the book. In view of the request made in our letter of August 6, 1965, that you neither imply nor infer in any manner an endorsement of the text or verification of its accuracy, it is requested that that inference of official sanction not be used."


HUNTINGTON D. SHELDON
Chairman

2/ The DIA Member's comment applies (see paragraph 3b of covering memorandum).

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